

# HHS ASPA COVID-19 MEDIA CAMPAIGN

A campaign designed to help Americans make informed decisions about the prevention and treatment of COVID-19 and flu



## Earned Engagement Overview

The American public is starving for reliable and reputable information on the COVID-19 pandemic, preventing the spread of the virus, and the impending vaccine. An earned media campaign that results in high-quality stories in influential media outlets will set the stage for the dissemination of critically important public health information, including the role that vaccines, social distancing, mask wearing, and handwashing play in keeping people healthy and able to live safely with a greater degree of normalcy.

The goal of the earned media campaign is to *deliver campaign messages via authentic and credible stories using information sources Americans regularly view and rely on in their daily lives*. The earned engagement approach complements other parts of the Campaign, reinforcing paid messaging and partnership engagement, as well as providing fodder for social media amplification, to create a comprehensive, integrated campaign.

Our social media efforts will result in messages that can be shared across official HHS platforms as well as other government-owned media and partner social media accounts. Recommended channels include the Department's official [@HHSGov Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), and [Instagram](#) feeds until an official campaign platform is established. We will also engage a set of diverse social media influencers with each paid advertising flight and as new activations are planned.

Woven throughout all earned media strategies will be a particular focus on reaching people of color and other audiences who are disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 to ensure they are receiving the critical public health information in culturally competent, in-language formats.

The Campaign's "earned engine" component, in conjunction with the other campaign tactics, will create more impact and ensure as many Americans as possible are seeing critical Campaign information across multiple channels.

## Media Strategies:

It is vital to equip consumers, health care and business leaders, patient advocates, medical societies, and policymakers with accurate, evidence-based information to help guide, promote, and implement initiatives that support vaccine readiness and health-promoting behavior

message

- State or region that has had high COVID-19 numbers reaches a level of containment.
- Deaths reach a new milestone.

#### **Scenario 4: Key meetings/convenings**

- Committee Hearing: COVID-19: An update on the Federal Response (9/23)
- FDA advisory committee meeting on vaccines (10/2)
- American Public Health Association (APHA) Annual Meeting: Creating the Healthiest Nation: Preventing Violence (10/25)
- STAT Summit (11/16)
- Forbes Healthcare Virtual Summit (12/2)
- AcademyHealth: 13th Annual Conference on the Science of Dissemination and Implementation in Health (12/15)
- J.P. Morgan 39th Annual Healthcare Conference (1/11)

#### **Rapid Response Action Menu**

- First:
  - Identify opportunity and agree to proceed with outreach efforts.
- Then consider the following actions:
  - Offer spokespeople to a variety of news outlets, including national, regional, online, and broadcast, for interviews.
  - Issue a spokesperson quote or brief statement to insert the Campaign/campaign spokespeople into breaking news.
  - Hold a virtual press conference to reach large number of journalists.

#### **Crisis Scenarios**

A crisis is any sudden and unpredictable event that invites external scrutiny and has the potential to negatively impact the reputation of HHS, the credibility of the Campaign's public health messages, and overall trust in the vaccine development and distribution process. One of the most difficult challenges, yet key elements of success, in issues management can be determining when a situation warrants a response. The initial preparation and dialogue among campaign leaders to agree on a plan sets the stage for a timely and appropriate response.

#### **Scenario 1: Negative story about the Campaign**

- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED] raised about the use of federal funds for the vaccine-readiness
- [REDACTED]

- Questions are raised about motivations behind the Campaign, including accusations of using a public health campaign to promote a political message, instead of a scientific one.
- Campaign spokesperson steps down or is removed from position.
- Negative news about a high-profile person involved with the Campaign, including a influencer spokesperson, comes to light (e.g., they become ill with COVID-19 or from a vaccine or say something counter to the Campaign's messages).

#### **Scenario 2: Lack of confidence in vaccine development**

- Scientists and health professionals express concern that vaccine trials were ended too soon to provide reliable data.
- Clinical trial for vaccine did not include diversity in participants and questions are raised about safety and effectiveness for specific populations.
- Vaccination is criticized in media as a boon for pharmaceutical companies, creating skepticism about the public good.

#### **Scenario 3: Chaotic rollout of vaccine**

- Rollout of vaccine is chaotic with complaints that some areas have plenty and others none; or large quantities of vaccine are mishandled (e.g., temperature issues).
- Requirements and/or process for receiving a vaccine evolve or are not well communicated, creating a confusing and/or frustrating process.
- General lack of interest in receiving a vaccine creates an unused product and continued community transmission.

#### **Scenario 4: Adverse events/lack of effectiveness**

- News coverage or social media posts highlight anecdotal reports of adverse events after receiving the vaccine.
- News coverage highlights people who contracted COVID-19 despite the vaccine.

#### **Issues Management Action Menu**

- First:
  - Evaluate the impact of the event on campaign credibility and messaging.
  - Evaluate credibility and reach of news source and opposition.
  - Monitor social media channels for viral pick-up.
- Then, determine if a response is necessary based on initial evaluation.
  - If a response is deemed necessary, then:
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- Issue a statement and distribute widely through appropriate communications channels, as well as post to relevant campaign communications channels.
  - Arrange interviews with relevant spokesperson (see Spokesperson Chart below).
  - Reinforce messaging on social channels.
  - Activate allies to speak on behalf of the Campaign.
- If a response is not deemed necessary, then:
  - Do nothing and continue to monitor for escalation.
- Regardless of response action, review messaging and all other aspects of the Campaign—paid and earned—to ensure they remain appropriate in light of issue.
  - Immediately halt components of the Campaign that are not a fit in the current environment.
  - Change or refocus messages and components of the Campaign that are counterproductive to better support Campaign goals.

## SPOKESPERSON CHART

Many of the spokespeople for crisis communications are also in the earned media spokesperson chart. Additional contacts for crisis communications are listed below.

Name/Title	Areas of Expertise	Contact Information
Francis S. Collins, M.D., Ph.D., director of the National Institutes of Health	Vaccine, clinical trials science	e: o: m:
State and local health department officials	State and local outbreaks and recommendations	e: o: m:
Spanish-proficient SMEs at the federal, regional, state, county, and local levels	Public health	e: o: m: